



*P. MILLAR, COMMISSIONER
AND GENERAL MANAGER,
M. T. S.*

F O R E W O R D

This brochure is presented as a souvenir to mark three important events in the history of telephone communication in Manitoba:—The official opening of a new telephone building in the Town of Selkirk, the inauguration of dial service in the Town and the establishment of community dial offices at Lockport and Petersfield.

These events, which culminated in the "cut-over" at midnight on February 27th, 1954, are of more than local significance, being essential steps in a plan of modernization affecting the entire Province of Manitoba. They have, in fact, even wider associations, because they include features which fit into an extensive scheme planned by many telephone organizations throughout the North American continent involving the use of new inventions and techniques for the improvement of telephone services to the public.

With respect to the operations just completed at Selkirk, our Executive acknowledges with gratitude the co-operation of His Worship Mayor S. Oliver; Mr. J. Donohoe, Reeve of the Municipality of St. Andrews; Mr. J. C. McMillan, President of the Selkirk Chamber of Commerce; and all who contributed their talents and labours to the project.

I have confidence that the new telephone facilities at Selkirk, Lockport and Petersfield will be of benefit to the community, not only as a social convenience but in promoting the welfare and progress of the Town and District.

Winnipeg,
March 25th, 1954.

P. MILLAR,
Commissioner and General Manager,
Manitoba Telephone System

The Inauguration of
DIAL TELEPHONE SERVICE

in the
SELKIRK AREA

including dial exchanges at

**SELKIRK
LOCKPORT
PETERSFIELD**



February 27th, 1954

The **T E L E P H O N E** *in Manitoba*

THE WORLD'S FIRST TELEPHONE was conceived in Canada. It was at his father's home in Brantford, Ontario, in the year 1874, that the young Scottish-Canadian Alexander Graham Bell first outlined some ideas he had for conveying speech by wire. It was in Brantford, too, in the summer of 1875, that he began writing out the specifications for his first telephone patent which was issued on March 7th, 1876. So, although much of Bell's experimental work was conducted in the United States and his successful transmission of speech over an electrical circuit was achieved in that country, Canada can be said to have played an important part in giving the world the first telephone.

The first telephone introduced into Manitoba was installed in Winnipeg in 1878 by a gentleman named Horace MacDougall.

In 1881, the Bell Telephone Company took over the business built up by Mr. MacDougall, then amounting to 26 subscribers, all on a party line arrangement.

The first switchboard in Winnipeg permitting switching circuits from one subscriber to another was installed in May 1881.

In 1908, the Manitoba Government bought out the Bell interests. So was born what was known as Manitoba Government Telephones, later to be known as the Manitoba Telephone System.

The growth of the System can be shown in various ways. Briefly, it is indicated by these few significant figures:—

1908—Paid to the Bell Telephone Company	\$ 3,300,000.
1953—Present value of Manitoba Telephone System assets	68,580,000

1908—Number of Subscribers' stations, approximately	13,000
1954—Number of subscribers' stations, (Jan. 31st, 1954)	185,121

While these figures show great increases in material assets and in the numbers of subscribers, they might not give a true picture of the efficiency of the equipment. Mere growth tells nothing of the *quality* of service provided; it does not indicate whether the plant is up-to-date or obsolete.

Actually, the story of the telephone in Manitoba is one of progressive improvement, keeping well abreast of advances in technique and incorporating new features designed to give telephone users in this Province the best service that modern science and engineering can provide.

The Manitoba Telephone System was among the first on the continent to make extensive use of dial equipment. In 1927, Winnipeg was the first city of its size in North America to have *entirely automatic* telephone service.

A little more than three years ago, Siemens Brothers of Canada Limited installed in our Fort Rouge exchange their very latest dial telephone equipment. That installation included a number of improvements representing a distinct advance in central office telephone apparatus. Manufactured in England, it was the first of its kind introduced into North America and the second of its kind in the British Commonwealth. The same type of equipment is now installed in the new telephone office here in Selkirk. These are just a few instances to show that your Telephone System is keeping pace with modern invention and development.

It is true that, like most or perhaps all telephone organizations, we have not been able to keep up with the tremendous demands for telephone service which followed the end of World War Two.

With what appears to have been a sudden rush of "telephone consciousness" and with a boom in residential and industrial construction, the applications for telephone service far exceed the capacity of manufacturers, central offices and outside plant. Meeting the demand has challenged the ingenuity and effort of telephone companies everywhere. Only those employed in such organizations have any conception of the problems presented and the amount of work which has contributed to their solution. If the story could be told—and there has been too little time to spare for telling it—the people of this Province might well be amazed at the manner in which their Telephone System has justified their faith in it.

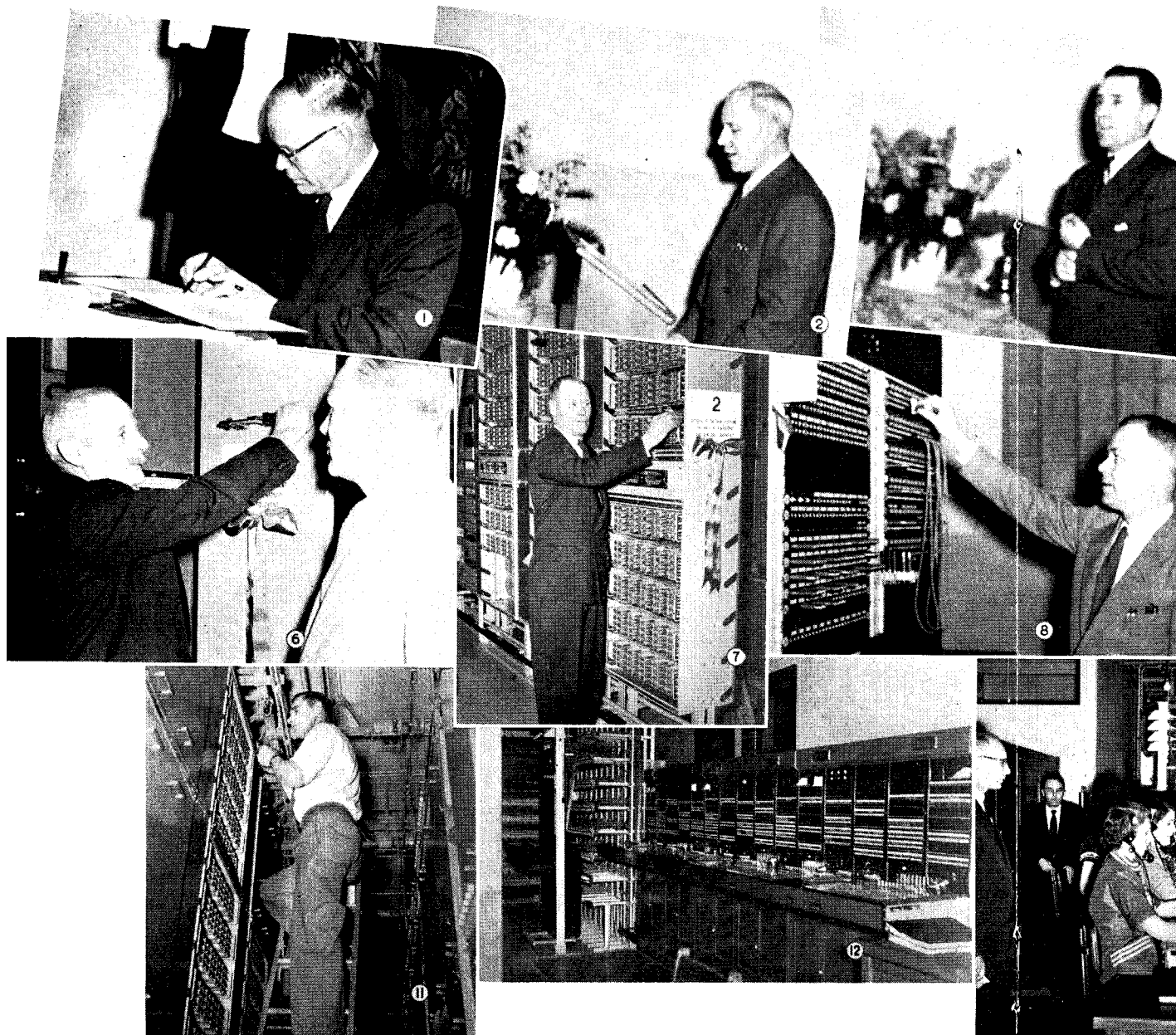
THE TELEPHONE IN SELKIRK



EVELINE STREET, SELKIRK, 1885

The building marked with an arrow housed the first telephone office in Selkirk. Gilhuly's drug store now stands on the site.

A F E W V I E W S O F T I



1. His Worship Mayor S. Oliver of the Town of Selkirk signs the visitors' book.
2. Mr. F. V. Gange, General Commercial Superintendent, was master of ceremonies.
3. Following a cordial welcome by Mayor Oliver (5), Hon. C. L. Shuttleworth, Minister of Public Utilities, delivered an address which was both interesting and humorous.
4. Telephone Commissioner Peter Millar outlined some of the developments of telephone communication in Manitoba and elsewhere.
5. Mayor Oliver praised the services rendered to the community by the local telephone staff.
6. Retirement of the old manual equipment was commenced by Mr. J. Donohoe, Reeve of the Municipality of St. Andrews. Right: Mr. S. G. Henderson, Provincial Equipment Supervisor.
7. Mayor Oliver opened the new telephone exchange by energizing the new dial equipment.
8. Mr. J. C. McMillan, President of Selkirk Chamber of Commerce, at the test desk, brought the new long distance switchboard into service.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

S O F T H E C U T - O V E R



9. Mayor Oliver placed the first long distance call over the new equipment. Standing: Left, Mr. W. D. Gall, Commercial Superintendent, District No. 1. Right, Mr. F. C. Covers, Plant Extension Engineering.

10. Group cutting the connections to the old manual switchboard.

11. Checking equipment after the cut-over.

12. View of the new toll (long distance) board shortly before the cut-over. The operators were on duty at the manual board nearby.

13. The new toll board in operation immediately after the cut-over. Standing: left foreground, Mr. W. W. Plampton, Traffic Supervisor, District No. 1. Standing: left rear, Mr. S. N. Williams, Toll Traffic Engineer.

14. The cut-over ceremonies completed, the guests and staff relaxed while refreshments were served very graciously by the operating staff, with Chief Operator M. J. Cooper as hostess.

THE TELEPHONE IN SELKIRK

Historical Review

First mention we have been able to find regarding telephones as affecting Selkirk is in a diary kept by the late Mr. James Colcleugh, first Mayor of Selkirk:—

"January 17th, 1878" (Less than 2 years after the telephone was invented)
1878 *"Started for Winnipeg by stage, driving on the ice all the way . . .*

"Called at Free Press Office . . . Operated on telephone for first time between the two Free Press offices . . ."

* * *

1879 Selkirk's first telephone office seems to have been on the site of the present Mr. Gilhuly's drug store, on Eveline Street. The date on which the telephone office was established there is uncertain, but Mr. Colcleugh built the original store in 1879 and served the community as druggist, telegraph operator and post master. Until 1885 we find no mention of the telephone office in Mr. James Colcleugh's diaries, but:—

1885 In that year there appear in one of his ledgers numerous entries showing charges of 30 cents each for telephoning various people in Winnipeg. There seems to have been, therefore, a telephone line connecting Selkirk and Winnipeg.

1887 First mention we have found of a *long distance line* between Selkirk and Winnipeg, however, states that the line was erected in 1887, in which year there were 602 telephones in Winnipeg. The number in Selkirk does not appear.

1896 By this date Mr. R. H. Gilhuly, father of the present Mr. George Gilhuly, had bought out Mr. Colcleugh's drug business on Eveline Street. Like Mr. Colcleugh, he combined the duties of druggist, telegraph agent and post office agent. Just when the telephone switchboard was added, we have not succeeded in ascertaining.

1899 According to a report in the "Selkirk Record" dated April 28th, 1899:—
"George Parke, a telephone line repairer, was in town this week. While inspecting the line between the City and Selkirk he had the misfortune to strike some mud, in consequence of which his rig broke down and he had to unhitch and travel the balance of the way on horseback."

1906 Miss Jean Smith, a well-known resident of Selkirk, tells us that she worked in Mr. Gilhuly's post office and drug store in 1906. She says it was one of the busiest places in town, the *telephone office*, post office and telegraph office all operating under one roof. The telephone operator at the time was Miss Vi Walker, now Mrs. John Callaghan, living in San Francisco.

1909 When the present Post Office was opened in 1909, the telephone switchboard was moved forward in the drug store. After September 1909, twenty-four hour service was inaugurated.

In those days, says Miss Smith, people were very nervous about using the telephone. Most of the telephoning was done by the operator on behalf of the customer who came to the office for the purpose.

* * *

1908 Now we bridge a few gaps and come to the year 1908, when the Manitoba Government bought out the Bell Telephone Company's interests in this Province. Some of the activity which followed is indicated by reports in the Selkirk Record:—

"April 11th, 1908: Selkirk can now boast of a night telephone service, that new departure having been commenced on Thursday night. This is something that has been urgently needed for some time and telephone subscribers will appreciate it."

"August 7th, 1908: The Manitoba Government telephone line has been completed north of Winnipeg Beach and will be in operation to Gimli within a few days."

1921 Operator toll dialing was installed in the Selkirk exchange this year, enabling operators at Selkirk to dial long distance calls into Winnipeg.

The office building prior to the present new one was erected this year.

Switchboards were replaced by newer types in 1915 and 1919.

1942 Central battery service was officially inaugurated on October 16th, 1942, though it had actually been in service since October 8th, when the magneto service was discontinued and all local Selkirk lines operated from central battery.

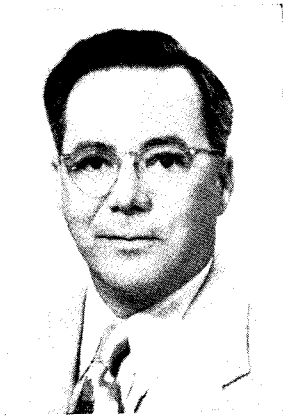
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The following figures show growth in the number of subscribers' stations in Selkirk since 1914:—

	Local	Rural	Total
1914	167	99	266
1919	209	151	360
1929	297	134	431
1940	359	206	565
1950	754	366	1120
1954	1351*	529†	1880

* Includes 2-party local service areas.

† Includes Lockport and Petersfield C.D.O.'s.



R. B. ROSS
M. T. S. Architect



The old office, now incorporated in the new building.

Personalities and Places



Left: J. Fenton, Chief Engineer and Asst. Gen. Manager, M.T.S.

Right: J. F. Mills, President, Siemens Bros. (Can.) Ltd. Representing manufacturers of the automatic dial equipment.



Entrance of New Office.



*Community Dial Office at Petersfield.
A similar one is at Lockport.*

THE TELEPHONE

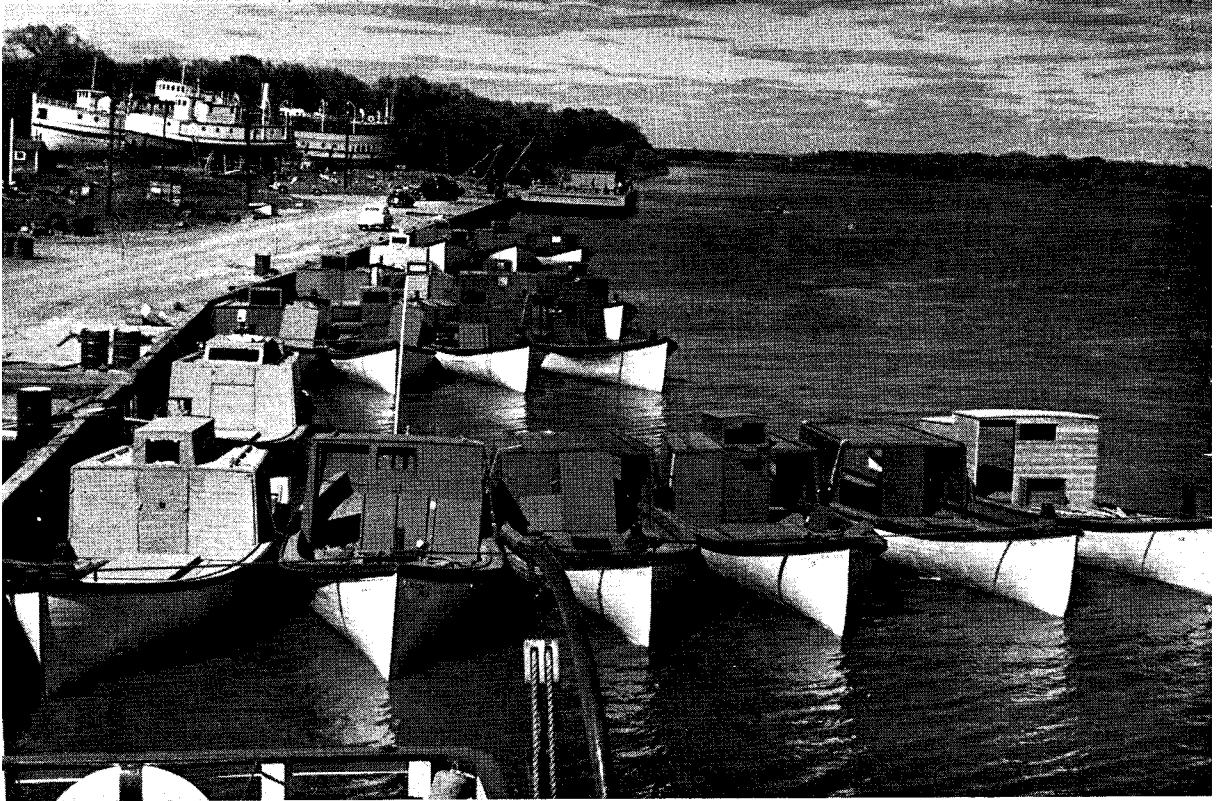
*The whispered words go winging round the world;
Advice they give, and information seek.
Of trade and commerce, love, affairs of state;
In many tongues, from many lands they speak.*

*They talk with speeding aircraft; ships at sea;
With teeming city; logging camp or mine;
With drug-store pay-booth, or with folks who share
Their service on a rural party line.*

*And seldom do we ponder as we view
The telephone upon our desk or wall,
How vast the net from which we choose a thread
Whenever we proceed to place a call.*

*The whispered words go winging round the world;
And many tales of joy and woe they tell;
But ev'ry spoken syllable proclaims
The grateful thanks we owe to Graham Bell.*

—D.R.P.C.



WATERFRONT SCENE AT SELKIRK



VIEW OF MAIN STREET